

The Honorable Ronnie L White
District Court Judge
US District Court for the Eastern District of Missouri

Anjanette Brown
Chicago IL

Character Letter for Nicholas Hodges

I am Nicholas' mom and my heart hurts for the boy who did wrong, and is angry at the man who did wrong. I could stop here and that would be all I need to say. However, there is more to Nicholas than this crime.

Of my three kids, he has always been the hardest worker. He was the one I never worried about being able to provide for himself, regardless of the job. Dishwasher at a restaurant, server, maintenance, painting, taking care of an elderly person – all that mattered for Nicholas was the pride he had in being able to support himself. The few times he needed a little financial help, I was happy to help because of how hard he worked.

All the kids and I get together a couple times a year – early in the year, the summer, and the fall. It is very important to me that the kids continue to get to know each other as adults, and have the time and space to have meaningful conversation that challenges and uplifts. Nicholas' absence during these gatherings has been a wound to the family.

I know Nicholas's situation is his fault and he must be punished. It is my desire Nicholas get the mental health treatment he needs, and from my conversations with him he is ready to accept it.

I want you to know I stand ready and able to support his transition from incarceration to rehabilitation and will help with the challenges that will pose as a felon and sex offender. Regardless of when you decide that transition should take place, I will be there ready to help.

Nicholas has been studying building houses while incarcerated and is working with a long-time friend on a plan to build tiny houses first for themselves and then as a business. I only ask that you look at the whole person, not just his offense, and give him the chance to show to you that he can be rehabilitated without the need for a lengthy prison sentence.

Thank you Judge for your time and consideration.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'Anjanette Brown', with a large, stylized loop at the end.

Anjanette Brown

Frederick A. Hodges
517 Caren Drive
Virginia Beach, Virginia 23452

The Honorable Ronnie L. White
District Court Judge
US District Court for the Eastern District of Missouri

Honorable Judge White:

I write to you on behalf of Nicholas Hodges, who is my son and a defendant who will appear before you for sentencing. I am aware of the charges against Nicholas. I do not condone his actions. I am saddened by the actions to which he has plead guilty.

The behaviors and actions which have lead him before your bench are not indicative of the child his mother and I raised, or of the adult I have seen him to be. Nicholas, "Nick", has always been a generous and caring person. In grade school, he loaned his colored pencils to another student who had already intentionally damaged regular pencils loaned to him. When asked why he loaned them, and the other student had kept the colored pencils, Nick's answer was, "But dad, if I didn't loan him the pencils, no one else would have." Nick has been quick to volunteer to work for friends, their families, his own family, or even strangers to help in many ways. I have seen him work long hours clearing brush at church or in helping a friend's family with a project.

I have known Nick to be caring and compassionate. He continues to be supportive and loving to family and friends who have remained in touch with him while he has been incarcerated. He regularly sends cards for birthdays and other milestones.

I do not know how the disturbing actions came into the life of such a seemingly happy and generous young man. My hope is that he can get counseling and help, so that he can redeem his life and become a positive member of society again.

I ask the court for mercy. I am aware that Nick's actions cannot be ignored. However, I am hopeful that mercy in sentencing will allow him to gain access to the mental health and behavioral modifications necessary for Nick to once again be a productive member of society.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Fred Hodges', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Frederick Hodges

The Honorable Ronnie L. White
District Court Judge
US District Court for the Eastern District of Missouri

Greetings from Bryan Jaster who is writing to you from Denver, Colorado. I have served professionally youth and families in the life of the Christian church for 17 years while working full time for congregations. I have been married for almost 20 years, have 2 amazing teens of my own aged 15 and 14 and every day am blessed by the ways God's great love and work happens through church community, my family and the work I get to do.

I've had the honor and privilege of knowing Nick Hodges since 2014. As director of youth ministry of a congregation in Winchester, Virginia I came to know Nick through many synod (Virginia wide) youth gatherings, at Caroline Furnace Lutheran Camp in Fort Valley, VA for weeks of summer camp and weekend retreats, as mentor when he worked part time with a Lutheran church, through weekly gatherings in Winchester with young adults, and while helping him decide on next steps when his time at Caroline Furnace finished. From 2014-2019 I had the best relationship with Nick of anyone other than my wife.

Nick is today a beloved gift of God to me and many. I have seen him grow and flourish in many roles as camp counselor, program director, and youth director in discerning and living out his calling. He is a hard worker, good listener, creative in the midst of challenges and shares his both imperfect and yet sufficient humanity with others. When I think about Nick every day I remember both the hard conversations about leading people well, times experiencing God's amazing grace and love for all of creation with Nick and moments of laughter where I would make Nick's coffee organic by putting pine needles in it.

I have countless stories filled with laughter, learning, challenge and joy with Nick as we worked alongside young people together. He was a counselor for my son during his week summer 2014 at Caroline Furnace. The way Nick facilitated the low ropes challenge elements of the Community Development Course allowed participants to be challenged and grow in community together. The love and respect he gave for other staff allowed for him to be an exemplary friend for many other college aged staff and also to lead others when he grew into that role. We planned and led retreats together that were safe, life giving and great gifts to the youth of my congregation. Every interaction I've had with Nick and have seen him do with others was commendable.

So, when I received a phone call a little over a year ago now that Nick was arrested for receipt of child pornography I was genuinely shocked, angered and dismayed. I was driving at the time and almost crashed my car due to the genuine shock that overcame me.

The actions he has now plead guilty to are deplorable and incomprehensible. As one who protects and cultivates communities that uplift the lives of minors I am to this day furious at Nick for downloading child pornography. He has broken the trust of many and justice for children is needed. Writing this letter is immensely difficult for me due to the specifics of the guilty plea, my daily entrusted task in caring for the dignity and well being of children and my genuine knowledge and love of Nick.

These actions are simply not the Nick I know and love. The actions he has pled guilty I do not approve of and yet in light of his parent's divorce and isolation of moving away from his close network of friends

and family in Virginia I believe that his time in 2020 was especially difficult for him and his actions that result in this guilty plea are not his core identity and person.

I also know his brother Ethan through Caroline Furnace. He and Nick were distant in high school but had become close as brothers while camp counselors and their relationship has deeply suffered in the last year.

For a young man who has lived most of his life outside at camps, life indoors and isolated in jail has been deeply difficult. I fear that as the days and weeks continue to isolate away from sunshine, creation and other people he will become more hopeless and depressed. The greater world will miss the gifts of the human he is and can become.

It is my genuine honor to continue to uplift and walk alongside the beloved human I know Nick to be. I am supportive of the legal process, treatment made available to him and whatever necessary steps may be available to help him contribute to our world.

I am deeply grateful for the opportunity to write this letter and for your time and deliberation.

Very truly yours,



Bryan W. Jaster

The Rev. Andrew Tucker

2862 Keystone Drive
Columbus, OH 43209
dtucker@capital.edu

November 8, 2021

Character Letter for Nicholas Hodges

Greetings,

My name is Andrew Tucker. I'm the University Pastor and Director of the Center for Faith and Learning at Capital University in Columbus Ohio. I've known Nicholas Hodges since the 2014-2015 school year at Radford University, where I met Nicholas during his time as a student. During that time, I served as Nicholas' campus pastor, and we've kept in touch infrequently as I served as a mentor when he would seek advice or support.

Nicholas was always a humble member of the community who was ready to help on campus or in the nearby congregation. As a child and sibling, he support his family through his parents' divorce and embraced his new family as parents remarried. Nicholas offered support to others on campus who went through similar struggles and encouragement to classmates and community members alike. In fact, he helped to found our campus ministry at Radford as a place for people who needed community support and led that initiative while a student.

Clearly, the crime committed was wrong and out of character for the Nicholas that I know.

Because of Nicholas' role in the family, a harsh sentence would certainly cause harm not only to him, but to a family that has been through so much trying to offer support. This is not primarily a financial concern, but a relational, emotional, mental health, and spiritual concern. Further, incarceration for this crime does not guarantee reform. Nicholas has a history of mental health struggles, and incarceration is likely to increase the severity of that and its negative effects on his life. As a young person with a long life ahead of him, Nicholas can still be a positive contributor to our society if the justice system embraces a restorative justice approach in this case.

I will continue to support Nicholas as a mentor and provide additional care, not only in terms of prayer, but advice, encouragement, and accountability through pastoral care. I would certainly support any reformative treatments or courses of action recommended by the justice system and alert the appropriate authorities if I come to know of his participation in any illegal activity.

Thank you for considering my perspective as you discern what is right in this situation.

Sincerely,

The Rev. Andrew Tucker

Exhibit B

The Honorable Ronnie L. White
District Court Judge
US District Court for the Eastern District of Missouri

Dear Honorable Judge White,

My name is Nathaniel Hodges, and I am a graduate student at Boston University's School of Social Work studying to become a Cognitive Therapist specializing in Trauma. I am the eldest sibling of the defendant, Nicholas (Nick) Hodges. I have known Nick since he was born, and we enjoy a very close and loving sibling relationship.

I would like to take some time to speak about Nick and how I've watched him grow and succeed over the years. Nick has always been an extroverted, goofy, and fun person. He loves to read and reads more books than anyone else in my life. He cares deeply for his family and friends and is the most reliable person you can call for help with solving a problem. He has always walked his own path in life. He enjoys the company of nature and is very knowledgeable about wilderness and survival tactics. He has long spoken about his desire to serve as a role model for others that have experienced hardships and wants to help others work to carve a place for themselves in life.

Throughout our lives, I've had the pleasure of watching Nick grow up. As his oldest sibling, I got to watch as he navigated new paths in his life that my parents never thought were available to someone. He took a road far less traveled in hopes of working towards leadership in wilderness and other outdoor programs. He loves joyously and strives to be a better and stronger from past failures and obstacles. He is hardworking, dedicated, and resilient.

I would like to take a moment to acknowledge the severity of the crimes that he's been charged with. I do not condone these actions. The surprise was intense when we discovered the charges, as he has no prior criminal activity on his record and was recently making great strides towards his future goals. I have spent many months trying to understand his charges with who the person is that I've known my entire life. These actions are completely out of character from what I understood.

The lives of our family have already been upended by his incarceration. Not getting to see him in person has made our lives incredibly difficult. If his punishment is harsh, he will miss the weddings of both myself and our younger brother, forever altering what should be joyous days for all of us. I regularly worry what it will do to our future family relationships without him there. Nick is in his mid-20s and has a full, vibrant life ahead of him. He was on a path towards a brighter and more fulfilling future; having to start again would be devastating and I worry he may never recover.

I believe Nick needs to enter treatment programs for the crimes that he's been charged with, and I will support him through anything he needs to recover fully. I will continue to support him monetarily while this process resolves, and I hope to be able to change the course of his life for the better soon.

Thank you, Honorable Judge White, for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Nathaniel Hodges

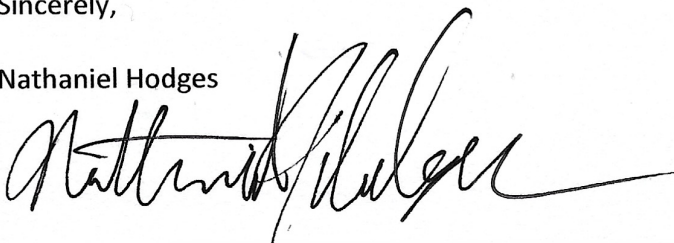
A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nathaniel Hodges', written over a horizontal line.

Exhibit B

The Honorable Ronnie L White
District Court Judge
US District Court for the Eastern District of Missouri

Dear Judge White,

My name is Ethan Hodges, and I am writing to you on behalf of my older brother, Nicholas Hodges. I have known Nicholas my entire life, and while I do not condone his actions that have led him to this point, I wanted to offer my perspective on his character.

Nicholas is my middle brother, born 16 months ahead of me. In a lot of ways, he and I were raised as twins because we are so close in age; however, we have often been told how dissimilar we are. That may be true – Nicholas is warm and passionate and wears his heart on his sleeve, while I am far more introverted and measured. Despite our differences, I seemed to always want to follow in his footsteps growing up. When he played a game, I played a game. He played the drums, so I played the drums. He joined the cross-country team, and a few years later I did the same. He worked as a camp counselor at the camp we attended growing up, and I decided I wanted to as well.

It was at that camp that I saw Nicholas' best traits on display. He is full of energy, extremely hard working, and cares deeply about those that he loves. Those traits led to endless hours of entertainment for the camp's attendees, many hours of projects and manual labor completed on behalf of the camp, and deep, lifelong friendships forged with his fellow counselors. His love for his friends shines through often. At one camp event, Nicholas asked current and former counselors what their favorite spot on property is and offered to pray for each person in that location. That is just one example of countless ways that Nicholas has offered meaningful, personal support to his closest relationships.

Nicholas is a classic middle child, sandwiched between two overachieving siblings. He has spent his life trying to forge his own way, to break out of people's expectations, and to find his place in the world. He's inspired by hard work and adventure rather than traditional ideas of success. That's the drive that has led him to many of the stops on his journey – to being a leader in his campus ministry, to playing the drums in church on Sundays, and to serving in various positions at religious organizations in states throughout the country. That's the Nicholas I know and the one that inspires me to find those glimmers of adventure in the world.

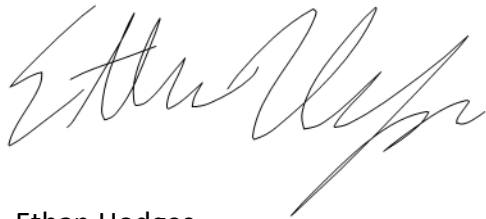
I'm not sure where I would be without Nicholas as my brother. I have many stories of him doing whatever he could do to support me. My favorite is one from when I was a baby, when I was upset about something and wouldn't stop crying. Nicholas knew my favorite stuffed animal and went to find it in my crib. He wasn't quite tall enough to get it out, so he tried to pull it through the bars by its ear. Naturally, the ear ripped right off. That story embodies Nicholas in my mind – perhaps a bit reckless, but you can never deny that his heart is in the right place. That's the

same Nicholas who is known to get emotional while telling me how proud he is of me and how much he loves me. He just can't stop his love pouring out into the world.

It has been very difficult living without my older brother for the past year. As my fiancée and I prepare for our wedding, we can't help but feel that the occasion is bittersweet without Nicholas around. Both his oldest sibling and I are getting married in 2022, and I have always wanted him as my best man.

Thank you for reading, and I hope that my letter has given you a glimpse into the man Nicholas is.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ethan Hodges". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Ethan" being more prominent than the last name "Hodges".

Ethan Hodges

Character Letter for Nicholas Hodges

To:

The Honorable Ronnie L White
District Court Judge
US District Court for the Eastern District of Missouri

My name is Genie Brown and I'm proud to be the maternal grandmother of Nicholas Hodges. His grandfather Keith and I have been a part of his life since his birth in 1995. And what fun that life had been. Nicholas is so full of life and love for his friends and family.

His interest in theatre and drama was realized during his high school years. One of my fondest memories was attending the play "A Christmas Story" where he portrayed Ralphie and what fun that was. When he came down the stairs in the bunny pajamas he brought the house down. When he graduated from high school, he was awarded the following:



This International Thespian award had not been awarded at this high school for many years and represented 1700 hours of volunteer time spent doing whatever needed to be done. He didn't have to be the person out front all of the time. He also loved the time he spent "drumming" – whether he was marching on a field with a drum or playing inside for a concert. This love stayed with him after graduation as he volunteered at a small Lutheran Church – helping to provide the church with a praise band. He worked many summers at a Lutheran youth camp – and you could be assured he would be drumming on something.

His work ethic showed clearly when we had various jobs. He worked at a restaurant one time and was such a good worker that he progressed from washing dishes to being one their most popular servers.

The crime he committed is so out of character. Not being able to see him for over a year has been so hard for me and his not being able to be here with his brother and cousins at Thanksgiving leaves a huge hole in our family and in my heart.



Genie and Keith Brown with Nicholas at his High School graduation in 2013.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely yours,

Genie Brown

Dear Judge White,

Hello! I am Ray Shelor (they/them) and I am an old friend of Nicholas. I've known him almost all our lives. Nick has been friendly, supportive and fiercely loyal as long as I have known him. Nick has a smile and laugh that can brighten anyone's day, and he decided to use those talents to do just that. I've volunteered with him at church events and summer camps for years and each time I am amazed at how positive and genuine he is, even after the hardest weeks.

I was shocked to hear about his crimes. It wasn't something I would have expected from him, at all! It's horrible, but it is so out of character that I just do not have the words to express my shock. I am worried however about him being incarcerated for too extended a period. He is really good at giving himself a hard time, and I have been there enough times to hear from him just how much he is punishing himself.

Nick needs help, and I hope that he will receive it. I do believe that he could benefit from help while still participating in the community. I've already been talking with him about what he can do to still support communities when he gets the chance again, that is what he is thinking about right now. How to help others with his trade skills that he has accumulated over the years. He just wants to do what he can to help others and I for one would love to see him given that chance once more.

I want to thank you so much for your consideration, I know you likely read a lot of these letters and I am glad to give you my perspective into his life.

Sincerely,

Ray Shelor